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**Subject:** Pavillion, Wyo., residents say state ignored polluted water

## OIL AND GAS: Pavillion, Wyo., residents say state ignored polluted water

Mike Soraghan, E&E reporter

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The people in Pavillion, Wyo., with contaminated groundwater have a message for the members of Congress who will be talking about them tomorrow: The state has done nothing to help.

"The people of Pavillion area were ignored and minimized by their state government," said John Fenton, a Pavillion landowner and leader of a local group called Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens, in a conference call today. "They looked to the state to provide answers and help. There was no help from the state or the natural gas industry."

### SPECIAL REPORT



*A new wave of drilling, fueled by the practice some call fracking, 'is promising prosperity and energy security for the country. E&E investigates whether anyone is ensuring it's done right. [Click here](#) to read the report.*

Fenton also said that he and other landowners were disappointed that no one from their community was invited to testify at tomorrow's hearing before the Energy and Environment Subcommittee of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee. The hearing will highlight the question of whether states or the federal government should regulate drilling (*E&E Daily*, Jan. 30). Fenton said he suspects lawmakers did not want to hear what Pavillion residents have to say.

"It's too powerful," he said.

State officials have dismissed EPA's finding that hydraulic fracturing by natural gas drilling companies contaminated the aquifer under Pavillion, as has Encana Corp., the area's primary driller. Both have also disparaged the federal agency's methods and criticized it for not releasing information. Republican officials in charge of the hearing made clear that they share those sentiments, titling the hearing "Fractured Science."

Gov. Matt Mead (R) has said the state should be in charge of the investigation into water pollution in the area and has criticized EPA's findings as "scientifically questionable."

But the residents of the central-Wyoming community are jumping to the defense of EPA, an agency that has found itself under constant attack from the Republican House.

"You always hear the skeptics down-talk the EPA, but for us it has been nothing but a positive experience working with the EPA," Fenton said. "They're being attacked for doing their jobs."

Wyoming Oil and Gas Supervisor Tom Doll will be making the state's case in tomorrow's hearing. Doll joined in a press release from Mead's office criticizing EPA's findings, suggesting in particular that EPA might have contaminated the groundwater itself when drilling a monitoring well (*E&ENews PM*, Dec. 8, 2011).

EPA will be represented at the hearing by Jim Martin, the administrator of the agency's Denver-based regional office, which administers EPA activities in Wyoming. He will replace Paul Anastas, EPA's science adviser and assistant administrator for the Office of Research and Development, who had been scheduled to testify separately from Doll and other witnesses. Martin will be seated at the table with the other witnesses.

Industry will be represented by Kathleen Sgamma, vice president of government and public affairs for the Denver-based Western Energy Alliance. She is expected to criticize EPA for rushing its report.

"In a situation like Pavillion where the conclusions were rushed out without proper review and verification, it raises the question of undue political influence," Sgamma will say, according to her prepared [testimony](#).

At tomorrow's hearing, lawmakers could also bring up EPA's decision to intervene in a drilling-related water contamination case in Dimock, Pa. Cabot Oil & Gas Corp., which was fined by the state for allowing gas to leak into the water supply, today criticized EPA's decision to intervene.

"It appears that EPA selectively chose data on substances it was concerned about in order to reach a result it had predetermined," Cabot said in a [position paper](#) issued today.

Also today, the National Ground Water Association, a trade association, recommended some principles to be used when developing policy about hydraulic fracturing. Among the principles are disclosure to regulators of the chemicals used in fracturing, proper construction and maintenance of wells, development of water supply plans and best management practices to prevent spills.